

# Board of Education Agenda Item

Item: \_\_\_\_\_ M. \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ July 27, 2005 \_\_\_\_\_

Topic: Report of Findings of the School-Level Academic Review Process for 2004-2005

Presenter: Mrs. Kathleen M. Smith, Director of the Office of School Improvement

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## Origin:

☒ Topic presented for information only (no board action required)

☐ Board review required by

☐ State or federal law or regulation

☐ Board of Education regulation

☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

☐ Action requested at this meeting ☐ Action requested at future meeting: \_\_\_\_\_  
(date)

## Previous Review/Action:

☒ No previous board review/action

☐ Previous review/action

date \_\_\_\_\_

action \_\_\_\_\_

## Background Information:

The *Regulations Establishing Standards for Accrediting Public Schools in Virginia* (SOA), 8 VAC 20-131-340.A., require any school rated as “accredited with warning” to undergo an academic review. It is the responsibility of the Department of Education to develop and administer the academic review process in accordance with guidelines adopted by the Board. The school-level academic review process for 2004-2005, approved by the Board, is included as Attachment A.

In 2004-2005, 255 schools were accredited with warning. Two divisions (Fairfax County and Waynesboro City) requested and received permission to conduct their own reviews for eight warned schools. A total of 33 warned schools in four divisions (Lee County, Sussex County, Petersburg City, and Richmond City) were provided technical assistance as a part of the division-level review process. Four schools accredited with warning employed turnaround specialists and were not subject to traditional reviews. One regional school

accredited with warning was changed from a school to a program. Fries Middle School in Grayson County was temporarily closed due to construction and a review could not be completed, leaving a total of 208 warned schools that received technical assistance through the school-level academic review process.

In 2004-2005 technical assistance provided by the school-level academic review process to warned schools was determined by a “tiered” approach as indicated in Attachment B. Tier I schools were provided more state-directed technical assistance than Tier II or Tier III schools. In 2004-2005, there were 63 Tier I reviews, 54 Tier II reviews, and 91 Tier III reviews.

### **Summary of Major Elements:**

The Office of School Improvement (OSI) has analyzed data using information from the final reports and school staff evaluations. Data were used to identify specific indicators most often cited as needing improvement and essential actions most commonly cited by the academic review teams.

An analysis of data from academic reviews conducted during the past school year revealed the following areas of strength:

1. making curriculum resources and supplementary materials available for use by teachers;
2. providing opportunities for students to take tests that are similar in content and format to state assessments;
3. maintaining a safe and orderly environment for learning;
4. assessing student progress on a regular basis; and
5. allocating resources to extend learning time beyond the regular school day.

An analysis of data from academic reviews conducted during the past school year revealed the following areas for improvement:

#### Curriculum alignment and instructional delivery

1. differentiating instruction to meet the identified needs of individual students and groups of students;
2. providing students with learning experiences that engage them in active learning; and
3. using student performance data to develop daily lesson plans that reflect consideration of the learning strengths and needs of students.

#### Professional development opportunities provided to staff

1. designing an ongoing, school-based program of professional development that is based on the analyses of data and is aligned with the school’s goals for improving student achievement;
2. monitoring the degree to which new practices are implemented and prescribed; and
3. providing opportunities for teachers to experiment, practice, and obtain feedback as they integrate newly learned skills into their repertoire of instructional practices.

#### Use of instructional time and school scheduling practices

1. organizing instruction and structuring lessons to maximize student time-on-task;
2. maintaining a high level of student engagement throughout the lesson; and
3. regularly monitoring the use of instructional time in classrooms.

Use of data to make instructional and planning decisions

1. using results of data analyses to design, monitor, and evaluate instructional programs, support services, and professional development activities;
2. analyzing data over time to look for trends in student performance and to identify strengths and limitations of instructional programs and services; and
3. training staff in collecting and analyzing data to identify relevant goals and objectives for school improvement planning and to monitor the plan's implementation and evaluate improvements over time.

School improvement is an ongoing process and the school-level academic review provides a synopsis of the school's strengths and weaknesses at one point in time. The follow-up technical assistance visits are critical to the school's continued improvement.

The SOA, 8 VAC 20-131-310, requires that schools accredited with warning submit a three-year school improvement plan; however, an on-site review has been completed in each school year for those schools that have been warned in consecutive years.

Schools accredited with warning in 2005-2006 that received an academic review in 2004-2005 will begin the 2005-2006 school-level academic review process with technical assistance through follow-up visits as indicated in Attachment A. Follow-up visits will monitor the implementation of the school improvement plan and monitor the essential actions provided by the academic review team.

**Superintendent's Recommendation:**

N/A

**Impact on Resources:**

None

**Timetable for Further Review/Action:**

None

**Report of Findings  
of the School-Level Academic Review Process  
for 2004-2005**

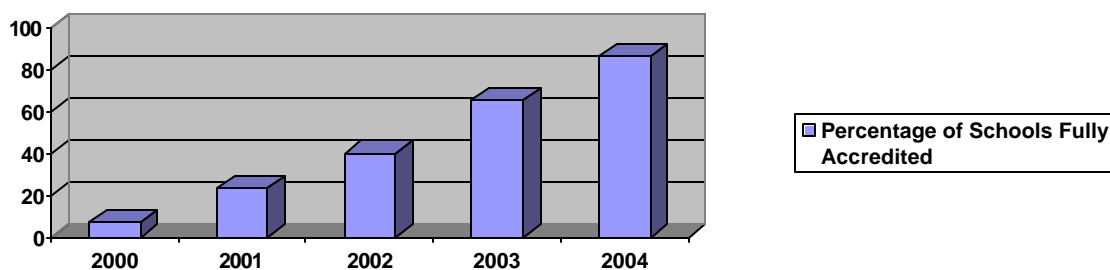
**Presented to the Virginia Board of Education  
July 27, 2005**

## Description of Warned Schools

In academic years ending in 2000 through 2003, the *Regulations Establishing Standards for Accrediting Public Schools in Virginia* (SOA), 8 VAC 20-131-30, assigned the ratings of fully accredited, provisionally accredited/meets state standards, provisionally accredited/needs improvement, accredited with warning, or conditionally accredited. In the academic year ending in 2004, the ratings assigned to schools changed, including only the ratings of fully accredited, accredited with warning, or conditionally accredited.

The percentage of schools designated as fully accredited, as indicated in Figure 1, has changed from 7% of schools in 2000, 23% of schools in 2001, 40% of schools in 2002, 65% of schools in 2003, and 86% of schools in 2004. In academic years ending in 2000 through 2003, in addition to ratings of fully accredited or accredited with warning, schools could receive ratings of provisionally accredited/meets state standards and provisionally accredited/needs improvement depending on the schools' pass rates on Standards of Learning (SOL) assessments. However, in 2004, the SOA provided only the ratings of accredited with warning or fully accredited, moving the percentage of schools designated as accredited with warning from 3% in 2003 to 14% in 2004. (New schools are rated as conditionally accredited.)

Figure 1: Numbers of schools fully accredited from 2000 through 2004



In 2004-2005, 255 schools were accredited with warning. Two school divisions (Fairfax County and Waynesboro City) requested and received permission to conduct their own academic reviews for eight warned schools. A total of 33 warned schools in four school divisions (Lee County, Sussex County, Petersburg City, and Richmond City) were provided technical assistance as a part of the division-level review process. Four schools accredited with warning employed turnaround specialists and were not subject to traditional school-level academic reviews. One regional school accredited with warning was changed from a school to a program. Fries Middle School in Grayson County was temporarily closed due to construction and a review could not be completed, leaving a total of 208 warned schools that received technical assistance from the Office of School Improvement (OSI) through the school-level academic review process.

Of the 208 schools receiving reviews, 12 have been warned for at least four of the last five years. The locations and types of these schools are shown in Table 1. The OSI is assisting five of these schools in seeking alternative accreditation as provided by the SOA, 8 VAC 20-

131.280.D.

Table 1: Number and types of schools warned in at least four of the five past years

School Division	Total Number of Schools	Warned Schools Type			
		Elementary	Middle	High	Alternative
Accomack Co.	9	1			
Brunswick Co.	6	1			
Chesterfield Co.	58				1
Grayson Co.	10	1			
Greensville Co.	5				1
Henrico Co.	62				2
Chesapeake City	44	1			
Danville City	15	1			
Portsmouth City	21	1	1		
Roanoke City	31				1

### School-Level Academic Review Process

During the on-site school-level academic review, the teams conducted interviews, analyzed self-studies, reviewed documents and observed classrooms to obtain data related to one or more of the following focus areas:

1. school improvement plan development and implementation;
2. curriculum alignment and instructional delivery;
3. use of data to make instructional and planning decisions;
4. use of instructional time and school scheduling practices;
5. professional development opportunities provided to staff;
6. implementation of instructional models/programs (for schools warned in English and/or mathematics);
7. systems and processes for implementing and monitoring the effectiveness of initiatives; and
8. school culture characteristics that support student achievement.

School-level academic review teams wrote a report of findings detailing areas of strength, areas for improvement, and essential actions each school must take as part of their school improvement plan. The length of time between the initial visit, in most cases January, and the final visit, in most cases late April or May, was approximately four months. As a part of the follow-up visits, schools were provided technical assistance to develop their school improvement plans, which were submitted to the department as required by the SOA, 8 VAC 20-131-310.

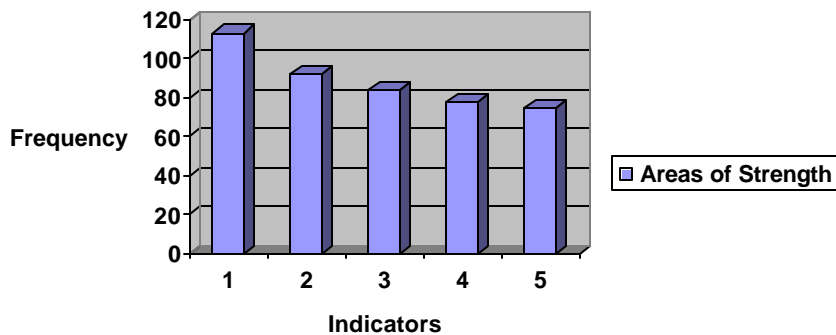
## Analysis of Data from 2004-2005 School-Level Academic Reviews

### Areas of Strengths Cited by the Review Team

In the 208 academic reviews completed, the five indicators cited most frequently as areas of strengths by the academic review team are shown in Figure 2. Numbers in parentheses designate the number of times the indicator was cited as an area of strength as follows:

1. making curriculum resources and supplementary materials available for use by teachers (113);
2. providing opportunities for students to take tests that are similar in content and format to state assessments (92);
3. maintaining a safe and orderly environment for learning (84);
4. assessing student progress on a regular basis (78); and
5. allocating resources to extend learning time beyond the regular school day (75).

Figure 2: Five indicators cited most frequently as areas of strength by school-level academic review team in 2004-2005

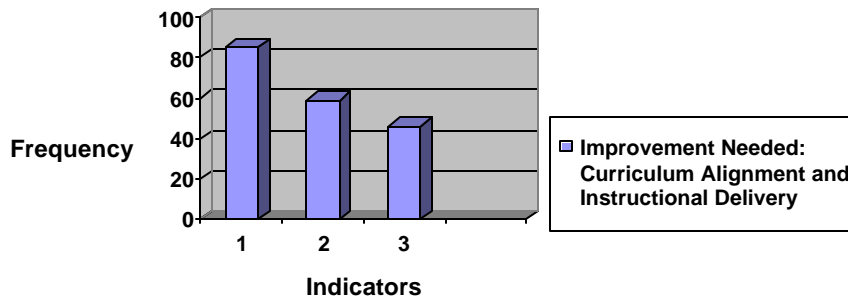


### Areas for Improvement Cited by the Review Teams

Review teams cited areas related to curriculum alignment and instructional delivery as needing improvement as shown in Figure 3. Numbers in parentheses designate the number of times the three highest indicators were cited as follows:

1. differentiating instruction to meet the identified needs of individual students and groups of students (85);
2. providing students with learning experiences that engage them in active learning (59); and
3. using student performance data to develop daily lesson plans that reflect consideration of the learning strengths and needs of students (46).

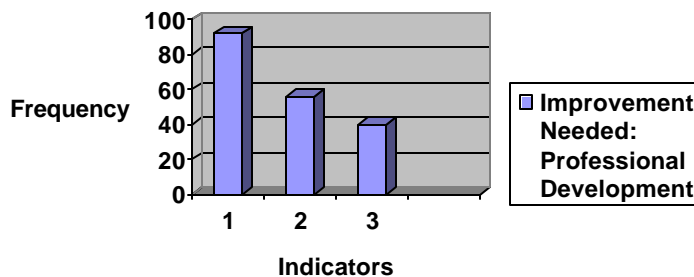
Figure 3: Areas cited for improvement related to curriculum alignment and instructional delivery



Review teams cited areas related to professional development opportunities for staff as needing improvement as shown in Figure 4. Numbers in parentheses designate the number of times the three highest indicators were cited as follows:

1. designing an on-going, school-based program of professional development that is based on the analyses of data and is aligned with the school's goals for improving student achievement (92);
2. monitoring the degree to which new practices are implemented and prescribed (56); and
3. providing opportunities for teachers to experiment, practice, and obtain feedback as they integrate newly learned skills into their repertoire of instructional practices (40).

Figure 4: Areas cited for improvement related to professional development

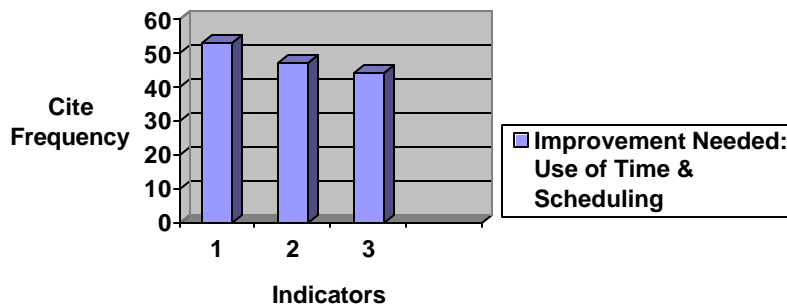


Review teams cited areas related to the use of instructional time and school scheduling practices as needing improvement as shown in Figure 5. Numbers in parentheses designate the number of times the three highest indicators were cited as follows:

1. organizing instruction and structuring lessons to maximize student time on task (53);
2. maintaining a high level of student engagement throughout the lesson (47); and
3. regularly monitoring the use of instructional time in classrooms (44).



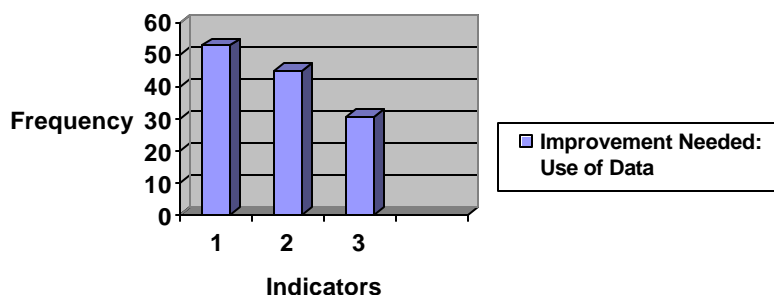
Figure 5: Areas cited for improvement related to the use of time and scheduling



Review teams cited areas related to the use of data to make instructional and planning decisions as needing improvement as shown in Figure 6. Numbers in parentheses designate the number of times the three highest indicators were cited as follows:

1. using results of data analyses to design, monitor, and evaluate instructional programs, support services, and professional development activities (53);
2. analyzing data over time to look for trends in student performance and to identify strengths and limitations of instructional programs and services (45); and
3. training staff in collecting and analyzing data to identify relevant goals and objectives for school improvement planning and to monitor the plan's implementation and evaluate improvements over time (31).

Figure 6: Areas cited for improvement related to the use of data for making decisions



### Essential Actions Indicated by the Review Teams

Review team members provided school improvement teams with essential actions that should be included in the school improvement plan and monitored over the next three years as required by the SOA, 8 VAC 20-131-310. These actions included, but were not limited to:

1. requiring teachers to employ a variety of instructional strategies;

2. having the instructional leadership continuously monitor classroom instruction and provide teachers on-going feedback;
3. incorporating a variety of research-based, effective teaching methods into classroom instruction;
4. isolating student performance data that would be used to identify effective improvement plan strategy executing and timelines for doing so;
5. collecting and analyzing data related to the implementation of the instructional method/model to determine if the model components are being implemented as intended and to determine if the model is yielding anticipated outcomes; and
6. analyzing actual instructional time used during the school day to determine where additional time might be reallocated from time taken for non-instructional issues.

### Summary

School improvement is an ongoing process and the school-level academic review provides a synopsis of the school's strengths and weaknesses at one point in time. The follow-up technical assistance visits are critical to the school's continued improvement.

The SOA, 8 VAC 20-131-310, requires that schools accredited with warning submit a three-year school improvement plan; however, an on-site review has been completed in each school year for those schools that have been warned in consecutive years.

Schools accredited with warning in 2005-2006 that received an academic review in 2004-2005 will begin the 2005-2006 school-level academic review process with technical assistance through follow-up visits as indicated in Attachment A. Follow-up visits will monitor the implementation of the school improvement plan and monitor the essential actions provided by the academic review team.

## OVERVIEW OF THE SCHOOL-LEVEL ACADEMIC REVIEW PROCESS

The School-Level Academic Review process consists of four types of visits conducted by a team of educators over the course of a school year. These visits are briefly described in the table below:

Type of Visit	Purpose	Projected Timeframe	Persons Responsible
<b>Initial Visit</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Determine current status of improvement efforts</li> <li>➤ “Prescribe” on-site review</li> </ul>	1 day, fall	Lead Reviewers
<b>On-site Review</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Assess instructional and organizational practices, through document review, observations and interviews</li> <li>➤ Identify areas of strength and areas for improvement</li> <li>➤ Establish “essential actions” and timelines for continued improvement</li> </ul>	3-5 days, late fall—winter	Academic Review Team
<b>Follow-Up Visits</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ <i>Technical Assistance</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Facilitate incorporation of “essential actions” into school improvement plan</li> <li>o Facilitate and support implementation of “essential actions”</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	2-8 days total, winter--spring	Coordinated by Lead Reviewer(s); (Technical assistance providers may vary)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ <i>Progress Check</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Determine progress of school in implementing “essential actions”</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	Periodic, 1-day, about every 4-6 wks	Lead Reviewer(s)
<b>Final Visit</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Identify significant changes in practice and recognize accomplishments</li> <li>➤ Assess status of school improvement planning efforts</li> <li>➤ Suggest “next steps” for continued improvement</li> </ul>	1 day, spring	Lead Reviewer(s)

Following the On-Site Review and Final Visits, school and division personnel are asked to complete evaluations of the academic review process. These data are compiled by the office of accreditation and used to monitor and refine the review process to ensure that the needs of schools are being met.

Table 1: Description of School-Level Academic Review Tiers Beginning with the 2004-2005 School Year

Tier	Characteristics of Schools Warned in the Current Year (beginning 2004-2005)*	Academic Review Team Members provided by DOE	Academic Review Team Members provided by Division (certified in the process)	Three year School Improvement Plans and annual status report	Instructional Model Program in English and/or Mathematics
<b><u>Tier I:</u></b>  <b>State Directed</b>  <b>(current model)</b>	<b><i>Any school</i></b> warned in the same content area in either of the past two years OR <b><i>Any school</i></b> warned in 3 or more content areas OR <b><i>Title I school</i></b> warned in English and/or mathematics that DID NOT meet requirements in the content area(s) to make AMO in all students subgroup under NCLB	Follows current process: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Team Leader</li><li>▪ Content –area specialist(s) (DOE or vendor)</li><li>▪ Special education team member (T/TAC)</li><li>▪ Team members</li></ul>	None	Follows requirements of <b>8 VAC 20-131-310 F.</b>	Follows requirements of <b>8 VAC 20-131-310 B.C.D.E.</b>
<b><u>Tier II:</u></b>  <b>Local Assistance</b>	<b><i>Title I school</i></b> warned in English and/or mathematics that DID meet requirements in the content area(s) to make AMO under NCLB OR <b><i>Non-Title I school</i></b> warned in English and/or mathematics that DID NOT meet requirements in the content area(s) to make AMO in all students subgroup OR <b><i>Any school</i></b> warned in science and/or history social sciences with a pass rate more than 14 points lower than that required for full accreditation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Team Leader</li><li>▪ Content Specialist(s) (DOE or independent contractor)</li><li>▪ Special education team member (T/TAC)</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Team members</li></ul>	Division superintendent certifies that SIP meets requirements of <b>8 VAC 20-131-310 G.</b>  AND Division staff monitors plan development, implementation, and results.	Division superintendent may request a waiver under <b>8 VAC 20-131-330</b>
<b><u>Tier III:</u></b>  <b>Locally Directed</b>	<b><i>Non-Title I school</i></b> warned in English and/or mathematics that DID meet requirements in the content area(s) to make AMO in all students subgroup OR  <b><i>Any school</i></b> warned in science and/or history social sciences with pass rate within 14 points of that required for full accreditation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Team Leader</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Content specialist(s)</li><li>▪ Team members</li></ul>	Division superintendent certifies that SIP meets requirements of <b>8 VAC 20-131-310 G.</b>  AND Division staff monitors plan development, implementation, and results.	Division superintendent may request a waiver under <b>8 VAC 20-131-330</b>